



Opening Statement

June 16, 2015

Media Contact: Susan Phalen
(202) 226-8477

Statement of Subcommittee Chairman John Katko (R-N.Y.) Subcommittee on Transportation Security

Markup: H.R. 2750 and H.R. 2770

Remarks as Prepared

I'm pleased to hold this markup today to consider two bipartisan bills, which will put into law measures to address security vulnerabilities in our nation's airports. I appreciate Ranking Member Rice and the other Members of the Subcommittee for their commitment to work collaboratively on these bills. Aviation workers and screening equipment are two essential pieces of the many layers of security that protect our nation's aviation system. However, the DHS Inspector General has recently identified shortcoming in how we vet these workers and maintain this critical equipment. Today our Subcommittee is showing leadership on these issues, and marking up two pieces of legislation that will address these recently identified vulnerabilities. It is our duty to ensure that security concerns are addressed in a timely manner and I am delighted that we can do that today in a bipartisan manner.

The first bill being considered is H.R. 2750, the Improved Security Vetting for Aviation Workers Act of 2015. This bipartisan bill, which I introduced, along with Chairman McCaul, Ranking Member Rice and Congressman Payne, will implement recent Inspector General recommendations to strengthen the vetting of credentialed aviation workers, who have access to sensitive areas of airports.

Last week, the DHS Inspector General released a report that found 73 aviation workers had ties to terrorism. Earlier today this Subcommittee held a hearing on this report. The findings of this report were alarming. While the Inspector General did find that TSA's vetting policies and procedures were 'generally effective', the report also identified significant shortfalls in the vetting policies for aviation workers.

For example, the IG found that TSA does not have access to all of the data it may need to thoroughly check an aviation worker's potential ties to terrorism. However, what is even more alarming is that a memo was sent to the TSA Administrator last year noting the need for additional information, and TSA has still yet to resolve this gap. The report also found that airports do not match the expiration date of an

employee's credential to the expiration of their legal work authorization in the United States. Again, while TSA stated they are working to resolve this issue by the end of the calendar year, it raises serious concerns that this gap exists in the first place. That is why this legislation is so critical, in order to guarantee that TSA addresses these known vulnerabilities.

Second, we'll consider H.R. 2770, the Keeping Our Travelers Safe and Secure Act sponsored by the Subcommittee's Ranking Member, Miss. Rice. This legislation will strengthen TSA's management of its screening equipment maintenance contracts and related maintenance activities. The DHS OIG released a report last month that found that TSA is not properly managing the maintenance of its airport screening equipment. Because TSA does not adequately oversee equipment maintenance, it cannot be assured that routine preventative maintenance is performed or that equipment is repaired and ready for operational use. This bill codifies the recommendations made by the IG. I am pleased to join Miss. Rice as a cosponsor of this important legislation.

I extend my thanks to the Members of the Committee for their work on these bills. The legislation we consider at today's markup will address critical security vulnerabilities at our nation's airports and help ensure the safety of the American people.

###